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Winter's Not Over Yet: Fire Officials Warn on Space Heater Use

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan said, "Fire officials have been relieved that this winter has been so mild so far and that their fears of cold weather combined with skyrocketing fuel costs leading to increased fire deaths from space heaters have not been realized until today." Coan was reacting to a series of recent fires that local authorities and State Police assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal determined were started or possibly started by space heaters.

A fire in Onset early this morning that claimed the lives of an elderly couple was started when a space heater was too near clothing in the living room. A Lawrence fire yesterday in a 9-unit apartment building, that caused \$500,000 in damage and one firefighter injury, was also started by a space heater. A space heater too close to the couch is one of the possible causes of a weekend fire in Dennis that severely injured the resident.

Coan said, "Winter is not over yet. If you are forced to use space heaters, remember to use caution and that to keep space heaters three feet away from anything that can ignite – papers, furniture, clothing, wallpaper, and people." He offered the following safety tips for space heaters:

- If you must use a space heater use it as safely as possible:

- When buying a heater, look for one that has been tested and labeled by a nationally recognized testing company.
- Keep the heater three feet away from drapes, furniture or other flammable materials. Place it on a level surface away from areas where a person or pet might bump it and knock it over.
- If you must use an extension cord, make sure it is a heavy-duty cord marked with a power rating at least as high as that on the label of the heater itself.
- Never leave a space heater unattended or running while you sleep.
- Keep electric heaters away from water. Never use them near a sink or in the bathroom.
- Do not use space heaters to thaw pipes. They are not designed for this task. Space heaters must be kept at least three feet away from combustibles including walls and wall covering.